

REMARKS

Claims 3, 7 and 8 are all the claims pending in the application.

Objection to Specification

The specification has been amended to correct the typographical error noted by the Examiner.

Objection to the Drawings

Corrected Figs. 11-15 (labeled PRIOR ART) are submitted herewith. With respect to the assertion that the drawings do not illustrate the connecting member recited in claim 7, Applicants respectfully disagree. The connecting member corresponds to the yoke member 21 illustrated in Fig. 3A.

Objection to Claim 8

Claim 8 has been incorporated in claim 3 with the typographical error corrected.

§ 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claims 3, 7 and 8

Claim 3 has been amended to more particularly claim the invention and to overcome the § 112, second paragraph, rejection.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 3 and 7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Igarashi et al. (GB 2343157). Claim 8 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Igarashi et al. in view of Minamoto et al. (US Patent 5,048,364). For the following reasons, Applicant respectfully traverse these rejections.

As amended, claim 3 recites as follows:

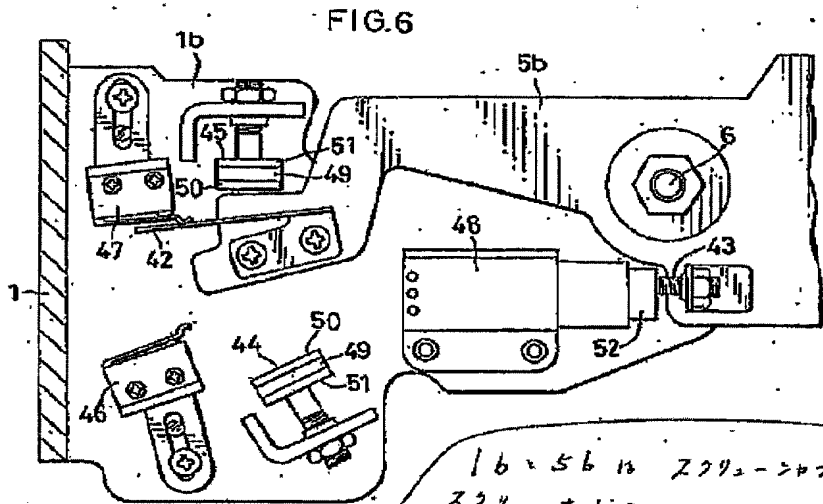
the column rotation restricting portion comprises
a primary stopper projection which is formed below the
pivot shaft of the tilt pivot on the lower bracket in such a manner
as to oppositely face the housing with a primary determined gap
held between the housing and itself; and
a second stopper projection which is formed above the
pivot shaft of the tilt pivot in such a manner as to oppositely face
the housing with a secondary determined gap held between the
secondary stopper projection and itself,
wherein when the upper bracket is separated from the
vehicle body, the primary stopper projection is adapted to abut
with the housing across the primary gap or the secondary stopper
projection is adapted to abut with the housing across the secondary
gap.

Igarashi fails to disclose primary and second stopper projections, as admitted by the Examiner.

Further, Minamoto also fails to disclose the claimed primary and secondary stopper projections. That is, as shown in Fig. 1 of Minamoto, the members 1 and 5 are fixedly connected through a screw shaft 13 and a screw nut 32. The motor 16 rotates the screw shaft 13 and moves the screw nut 32 in axial direction so as to achieve relative movement between the members 1 and 5. This relative movement realizes the tilt position adjustment of the steering wheel.

Minamoto

*members 1b, 5b are fixed by screw shaft 13 and screw nut 13.
Although not described, the members 50 and 5b does not abut with each other
at the time of collision.*



The members 1 and 5 are also fixed by a pair of bolts 6, 6, which functions as tilt rotation center. Thus, the members 1 and 5 are fixedly connected each other and even if collision load is inputted thereto, the positional relation between the members 1 and 5 is not changed. The stoppers 46 and 47 just restrict the tilt rotational limitation of the member 5b and the stoppers 50, 50 are just fail-safe members, which functions only if the stoppers 46 and 47 are failed.

Therefore, the stoppers 46, 47 and 50 do not abut with the member 5b when the upper bracket is separated from the vehicle body.

Therefore, since Igarashi and Minamoto fail to the claimed primary and secondary stopper projections, the invention as recited in claim 3 is patentable over these references.

According to the claimed invention, “when the upper bracket is separated from the vehicle body, the primary stopper projection is adapted to abut with the housing across the primary gap or the secondary stopper projection is adapted to abut with the housing across the secondary gap.”

According to this configuration, in an energy absorbing mode, which is at the time of car crash, after the upper bracket is separated from the vehicle body, initially, the steering wheel receives upward shock load. This load can be borne on the secondary stopper projection.

Thereafter, since the upper bracket is separated from the vehicle body, the steering wheel tends to fall off (moves downward). However, this motion can be prevented by the primary stopper projection.

Further, when assembling the steering wheel to the vehicle body, the primary stopper projection functions as a stopper so that the assembling operation of the upper bracket to the vehicle can be made easy.

Based on the foregoing, it is submitted that claim 3 and its dependent claim 7 patentably distinguish over the prior art. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Application No.: 10/573,587

Attorney Docket No.: Q93875

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

/Brian Hannon/

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON DC SUGHRUE/265550

65565

CUSTOMER NUMBER

Date: January 21, 2009

Brian W. Hannon
Registration No. 32,778